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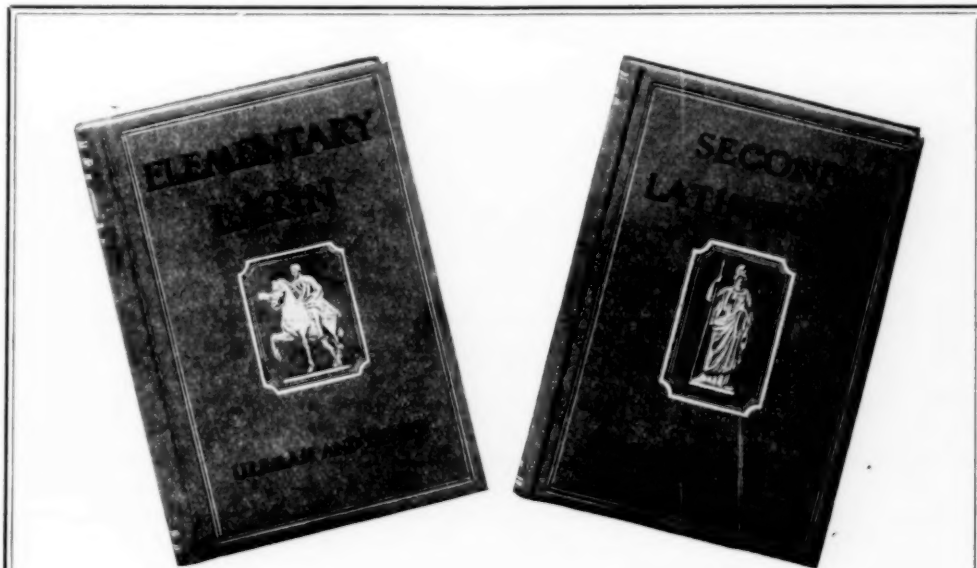
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VOL. XXI, No. 24

MONDAY, APRIL 30, 1928

WHOLE No. 581



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# The Classical Weekly

VOLUME XXI, No. 24

MONDAY, APRIL 30, 1928

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## THE SORTES VERGILIANAE<sup>1</sup>

It has been my purpose in writing this paper to bring together as far as possible all available material dealing with the actual use of the Sortes Vergilianae and to trace the history of the use of the Sortes from its beginning in the second century of the Roman Empire down to the present day.

Every student of Vergil is familiar with the well known passage, *Aeneid* 4.615-620 — the so-called curse of Dido—in which the unhappy queen prays that strife, defeat, and an untimely death may be Aeneas's portion. In connection with these famous lines editors like to recall the experience of Charles the First with the Sortes Vergilianae and to add the comment that this particular instance of royal consultation of Vergil is but one illustration of a custom that lasted through many centuries. Investigation reveals that, although rather sweeping assertions have been made concerning this phase of Vergil's influence, the writers for the most part fail to present sufficient evidence in support of their views.

Pierre Danet<sup>2</sup>, s. v. Sortes, says:

... In Greece and Italy they often drew the Lots from some famous Poet, as from Homer and Euripides; and that which presented itself first to view at the opening of the Book, was the Decree of Heaven: History furnishes us with a thousand Examples of this kind: We also find that about 200 years after Virgil's Death, they valued his Verses so much, as to believe them to be prophetic, and to use them instead of the ancient Lots of Praeneste:....

Out of this abundance of material Danet saw fit to cite only one lonely illustration of such consultation of the *Aeneid*. Comparetti<sup>3</sup> says (48) that "these so-called 'sortes Vergilianae' were consulted by Hadrian no less than by many of his successors, and continued popular throughout the middle ages..." However, we have such a record for only four of the Emperors who followed Hadrian. Comparetti does not relate any series of instances that would show that Vergil was so used during the succeeding centuries. Kirby Flower Smith, in discussing *The Later Tradition of Vergil* (*THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 9.178-182, 185-188), states it to be his belief that "this method of divination was often resorted to by the later emperors, flourished throughout the Middle Ages, and even to-day is by no means forgotten". Professor Toy<sup>4</sup>, in his chapter on

magic and divination, says (418) that "the method called 'sortes vergilianae' is still in vogue", but he does not cite any such use of Vergil.

Admired to the point of worship even in his own day, Vergil came to be still more highly esteemed as the years went on, until in the time of the Antonines his works were everywhere held in such reverence and superstitious regard that mysterious powers of prophecy were ascribed to them. It would appear that the Sortes Vergilianae first came into vogue in the reign of Trajan; the first reference to the practice is to be found in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*<sup>5</sup>. Aelius Spartianus (*Vita Hadriani* 2.8) relates that Hadrian, being

...anxious about the Emperor's attitude towards him, ...consulted the Vergilian oracle. This was the lot given out <*Aeneid* 6.808-812>:

"But who is yonder man, by olive wreath  
Distinguished, who the sacred vessel bears?  
I see a hoary head and beard. Behold  
The Roman king whose laws shall stablish Rome  
Anew, from tiny Cures' humble land  
Called to a mighty realm..."

This prediction of power was afterwards fulfilled, for by adoption Hadrian became Trajan's heir and successor.

When Clodius Albinus<sup>6</sup> was still a tribune of the soldiers, he went to the Temple of Apollo at Cumae, and made inquiry concerning his fate. To him fell the following passage (*Aeneid* 6.857-858):

He shall establish the power of Rome though tumult  
beset her,  
Riding his horse he shall smite both Poeni and Galli  
rebellious.

Julius Capitolinus (see note 6) adds the comment that it is well known that Albinus conquered many tribes in Gaul and that Albinus always believed that the prediction "he shall smite...<the> Poeni" referred to himself and to Septimius Severus, because Severus was a native of Africa.

Further proof that the Sortes Vergilianae were kept in temples and were publicly consulted is afforded by the case of Alexander Severus<sup>7</sup>. When Elagabalus was plotting against him, Severus resorted to the Temple of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste. Again *Aeneid* 6 furnished the oracle. Severus received his answer (4.6) in these words (882-883):

If ever thou breakest the Fates' cruel power,  
Thou a Marcellus shalt be.

<sup>1</sup>This paper was read at the Twenty-first Annual Meeting of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, held at The George Washington University, Washington, D. C., May 6-7, 1927.  
<sup>2</sup>Pierre Danet, *A Complete Dictionary of the Greek and Roman Antiquities*. This work, done originally in French, was published in an English version, with the title given above, in 1700 (London, Nicholson). The name of the translator is not given.  
<sup>3</sup>Domenico Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, Translated by E. F. M. Benecke (London, Swan Sonnenschein and Co.; New York, Macmillan and Co., 1895).  
<sup>4</sup>Crawford Howell Toy, *Introduction to the History of Religions* (Boston, Ginn and Company, 1913).

<sup>5</sup>The *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, most of them, can now be consulted conveniently in the Loeb Classical Library. Professor David Magie, of Princeton University, has published there two volumes (out of three), text and translation (1922, 1924). For the quotations from the *Scriptores*, except that from Trebellius Pollio's *Life of Claudius* (see note 8, below), I use Professor Magie's translation. For the *Life of Claudius* I used the text accessible to me, that in the Bipontine Edition (1787).  
<sup>6</sup>See Julius Capitolinus, *Vita Clodi Albi* 5. 4.  
<sup>7</sup>See Aelius Lampridius, *Vita Severi Alexandri* 4.6, 14.5.

Aelius Lampridius (14.5; see note 7) recalls another occasion on which Severus was moved to try his fortune at this kind of lottery:

...when at his mother's bidding he turned his attention from philosophy and music to other pursuits, he seemed to be alluded to in the following verses from the Vergil-oracle <Aeneid 6.847-853>....

Almost a century and a half after Hadrian, at a time when Rome was threatened by a vast horde of invaders from the North, another Roman Emperor had recourse to the verses of Vergil—Aurelian's predecessor, Marcus Aurelius Claudius. It is said<sup>8</sup> that, when Claudius was in the Apennines, he was uncertain about his future. Upon making consultation, he received this response <Aeneid 1.265><sup>9</sup>: "till the third summer has seen him reigning in Latium..." This prophecy was correct, for he enjoyed a reign of only two years. Of the same Emperor it is related that, wishing to make his brother Quintilius his colleague in the imperial power, he questioned the lots concerning him, and received the gloomy assurance of Aeneid 6.869: "Him the fates shall but show to earth, nor longer suffer him to stay". These words, too, found their fulfillment, for the death of Quintilius occurred just seventeen days after he had ascended the throne. A third trial of the lots was made by Claudius in an attempt to learn what the future had in store for his posterity. This time the oracle was more gracious; Claudius alighted upon this favoring line (Aeneid 1.278): "For these I set neither bounds nor periods of empire..."

It has been stated that Gordian the Younger, who, like Quintilius, was destined to rule only a few days, encountered the same verse in which Claudius read his brother's doom. However, Julius Capitolinus (*Vita Gordiorum* 20.5) does not speak of the Vergilian lots directly, but merely says that

...Often, too, the old man <Gordian I> recited these verses when he saw his son:

"Him the fates only displayed to the circle of lands,  
and no longer  
Suffered to be. Too great, too great did Rome's  
generations  
Seem to you else, O Gods, had this gift really been  
granted".

Aside from these few passages in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, there seems to be no reference in classical sources to the *Sortes Vergilianae*.

Writers of a much later period, however, sometimes relate one or more of the above-mentioned instances. Rabelais<sup>10</sup> in particular has collected them all and has made some additions of his own.

When Panurge fails to get from Pantagruel satisfactory advice on his problem, To marry or not to

marry, Pantagruel suggests (66) that they turn to the *Sortes Vergilianae*. In support of this counsel he enumerates all the classical instances in which this method of forecasting the future had proved remarkably successful. Pantagruel says,

"Bring hither Vergil's poems, that, after having opened the book, and with our fingers severed the leaves thereof three several times, we may, according to the number agreed upon between ourselves, explore the future hap of your intended marriage".

"It would be sooner done", quoth Panurge, "and more expeditely, if we should try the matter at the chance of three fair dice" <71>.

Quoth Pantagruel, "That sort of lottery is deceitful, illicit, and exceeding scandalous... Nevertheless, to satisfy your humour, in some measure, I am content you throw three dice upon this table, that, according to the number of blots which shall happen to be cast up, we may hit upon a verse of that book you shall have pitched upon".

Thereupon the three dice were thrown and the cast was five, six, and five.

"These are", quoth Panurge <73>, "sixteen in all. Let us take the sixteenth line of the page".

Then, opening the book at random with the finger nail, they read the sixteenth line on the page, the closing line of the Fourth Eclogue: "...no god honours with his table, no goddess with her bed!" The two friends interpreted this response in ways diametrically opposed to each other. After some discussion the ritual was again repeated and Aeneid 3.30 was obtained: "...A cold shudder shakes my limbs, and my chilled blood freezes with terror..." Pantagruel explains this ominous prophecy as meaning that, if Panurge marries, his wife will soundly beat him. Panurge answers (79), "Quite the contrary, I will beat her like a tiger if she vex me". For a third time the oracle was consulted and they read (Aeneid 11.782), "<she> raged with a woman's passion for booty and for spoil..."

"This portends", said Pantagruel (80), "that she will steal your goods and rob you. Hence, according to the lots, this will be your future destiny; your wife will be unfaithful to you, you will be beaten, and you will be robbed".

Panurge, however, maintained that all the replies were as favorable as possible. Hence, not being able to agree, they finally turned to other methods of divination which do not concern us here.

Rabelais declares (70) that, did he not wish to avoid prolixity, he could enumerate a thousand such adventures. He does mention one other experiment with the *Sortes*. This concerned Rabelais himself and a friend of his, Peter Amy. At one time the two men spent a number of years in a Franciscan monastery. Eventually the monotonous life of the monks became intolerable to them, and one day, while they were reviewing their troubles and wondering how they could longer endure such an existence, they opened their Vergil at random and fell upon this line (Aeneid 3.44), "...Ah! flee the cruel land, flee the greedy shore!..." The two monks, not slow to heed such friendly advice, straightway made their escape.

<sup>8</sup>See Trebellius Pollio, *Vita Claudii* 10.4.

<sup>9</sup>Throughout the rest of this paper the translations of passages of Vergil are by Professor H. R. Fairclough (*Vergil*, Loeb Classical Library, two volumes, 1916, 1918). This is true even of the Vergil passages quoted by Rabelais: I substituted there Professor Fairclough's translation as preferable to that by Urquhart and Motteux (see note 10, below).

<sup>10</sup>The Works of François Rabelais, Translated by Sir Thomas Urquhart and Peter Motteux, With the Notes of Duchat, Ozell, and Others; Introduction and Revision by Alfred Wallis (five volumes, London, Gibbings and Company, Limited, 1901).

The passage in which Rabelais deals with lotteries is in Book III, Chapters 10-12 (pages 65-80). I quote only a few lines from passages widely separated.



But how strikingly different was the effect these words had upon Savonarola! Like a trumpet call they rang in his ears, bidding him leave the wickedness of this world and seek the holiness of a life within the Church. In a letter written to his father explaining his motives for entering a monastery, Savonarola says<sup>11</sup>, "many times a day have I repeated with tears the verse, 'Alas! fly from this cruel land, fly from this greedy shore...'" While Savonarola, to be sure, did not consult the *Sortes Vergilianae* as such, still we know that for him as for many others the words of Vergil were a source of comfort and inspiration.

I now come to what is perhaps the most famous of all the stories connected with the *Sortes Vergilianae*. In one version, the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is the scene and Charles the First is the chief figure. Here the ill-fated king chanced upon that terrible passage in *Aeneid* 4 (615-620) which foretold so accurately his own tragic fate—loss of throne, children, friends, and life itself. The earliest authority in which the incident is discussed is Welwood's *Memoirs*, 105-107 (London, 1700). Dr. Welwood's vivid description follows<sup>12</sup>:

The King being at Oxford during the Civil Wars, went one day to see the Publick Library, where he was show'd among other Books, a Virgil nobly printed and exquisitely bound. The Lord Falkland, to divert the King, would have his Majesty make a trial of his fortunes by the *Sortes Virgilianae*, which everybody knows was an usual kind of augury some ages past. Whereupon the King opening the book, the period which happened to come up was...part of Dido's imprecation against Aeneas <*Aeneid* 4.614-620>....

It is said that K. Charles seem'd concerned at this accident, and that the Lord Falkland observing it, would likewise try his own fortune in the same manner; hoping he might fall upon some passage that could have no relation to his case, and thereby divert the King's thoughts from any impression the other might have upon him. But the place that Falkland stumbled upon was yet more suited to his destiny than the other had been to the King's, being the following expressions of Evander upon the untimely death of his son Pallas <*Aeneid* 11. 150-157>....

Lord Falkland met his death on the field of Newbury, on September 20, 1643<sup>13</sup>. It must, therefore, have been about the close of 1642 or the beginning of 1643, while King Charles was in his winter-quarters at Oxford, that this memorable visit was made. Professor D. A. Slater<sup>14</sup>, of the University of Liverpool, claims that, within his memory, in fact within thirty years, there had been on exhibition in the Gallery above the Bodleian Library the edition of Vergil which King Charles was persuaded to consult. Macray,

however, *Annals of the Bodleian Library* (see above, note 12), says,

...There is no copy of Virgil now in the Library amongst those which it possessed previously to 1642, which is "exquisitely bound" as well as "nobly printed"; it is not therefore possible to fix on the particular volume which the King consulted.

This matter of the book is not the only point about which there has been a difference of opinion. Authorities disagree about other more important details of the story. For instance, Archbishop Sancroft's papers<sup>15</sup>, now in the Bodleian Library, give Windsor as the setting. John Aubrey, in his manuscript, *The Remains of Gentilism and Judaism*<sup>16</sup>, would change the scene, time, and even the very participants. Aubrey writes as follows:

In December 1648, King Charles the First, being in great trouble, and prisoner at Caersbroke, or to be brought to London to his trial; Charles Prince of Wales being then at Paris, and in profound sorrow for his father, Mr. Abraham Cowley went to wayte on him. His Highnesse asked him whether he would play at cards to divert his sad thoughts. Mr. Cowley replied he did not care to play at cards; but if his Highnesse pleased they would use "*Sortes Virgilianae*". Mr. Cowley alwaies had a Virgil in his pocket. The Prince accepted the proposal, and prickt his pin in the fourth booke of the *Aeneid*, at this place <*Aeneid* 4.615-620>.... The Prince understood not Latin well, and desired Mr. Cowley to translate the verses, which he did admirably well.

Aubrey asserts also that he saw these verses written in Mr. Cowley's own handwriting, but that, before he had recovered Cowley's translation, he inserted an extract from Ogilby's Vergil. In an observation on the last line of the quotation, 'But die before his day, the sand his grave', Aubrey says,

Now as to the last part, "the sand his grave", I well remember it was frequently and soberly affirmed by officers of the army and grantees, that the body of King Charles the First was privately putt into the sand about White-hall; and the coffin, which was carried to Windsor, and layd in King Henry 8th vault, was filled with rubbish or brick batts. Mr. Fabian Philips...assures me, that the king's coffin did cost but six shillings—a plain deale coffin.

The mention of the poet Cowley brings to mind another interesting anecdote, told by Samuel Johnson in his *Lives of the English Poets* (in the volume on Cowley). In 1650, Cowley was in Paris acting as a secretary to a British lord. Some of the letters which he wrote at that time have been preserved. Dr. Johnson thinks that this correspondence is not unworthy of some notice. From one letter, which deals with the Scotch treaty, he quotes as follows:

The Scotch treaty is the only thing now in which we are vitally concerned; I am one of the last hoppers, and yet cannot now abstain from believing that an agreement will be made; all people upon the place incline to that opinion. The Scotch will moderate something of the rigour of their demands; the mutual necessity of an accord is visible; the king is persuaded of it. And to tell the truth (which I take to be an argument above all the rest) Virgil has told me something to that purpose.

<sup>11</sup>So states Mr. Irvine (see note 13, above).

<sup>12</sup>See *Anecdotes and Traditions Illustrative of Early English History and Literature*, Derived from MS. Sources, Edited by William J. Thoms, Camden Society Publications, 5.108-109 (London, John Bowyer and Son, 1839).

<sup>13</sup>Pasquale Villari, *History of Girolamo Savonarola and of His Times*, Translated by Leonard Horner, 1.343 (London, Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1863).

<sup>14</sup>Dr. Welwood's description is quoted in William Dunn Macray, *Annals of the Bodleian Library*, A. D. 1598 to A. D. 1867, 70-71 (London, Rivingtons, 1868).

<sup>15</sup>This statement is made by A. L. Irvine, on page 121 of his edition of the work called *The Fourth Book of Virgil's Aeneid on the Loves of Dido and Aeneas*, Done into English by the Right Honourable Sir Richard Fanshawe, Knight (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1924).

<sup>16</sup>In a paper entitled *Sortes Vergilianae or Virgil and To-day*, 7 (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1922). <I gave an abstract of this paper, with comments, in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 18.33-34. I mentioned Professor Slater's references to the *Sortes Vergilianae*. I have no doubt that the "scholar" was Professor Slater himself. C. K.>.

To his quotation from Cowley's letter Dr. Johnson adds the following opinion of his own:

This expression, from a secretary of the present time, would be considered as merely ludicrous, or at most as an ostentatious display of scholarship; but the manners of that time were so tinged with superstition, that I cannot but suspect Cowley of having consulted on this great occasion the Virgilian lots, and to have given some credit to the answer of his oracle.

A paper such as this, which is made up of a series of quotations dealing with the *Sortes Vergilianae*, would scarcely be complete without some reference to Robert Louis Stevenson, and to Robert Herrick, one of his characters in *The Ebb Tide*<sup>17</sup>. Stevenson, in a charming passage, draws a picture of this man, a beach-comber, who once had known happier, more prosperous days, and who still kept his "tattered Virgil" and would study it, as he lay with tightened belt on the floor of the old calaboose, seeking favourite passages and finding new ones only less beautiful because they lacked the consecration of remembrance. Or he would pause on random country walks, sit on the pathside, gazing over the sea on the mountains of Eimeo, and dip into the *Aeneid* seeking *sortes*. And if the oracle (as is the way with oracles) replied with no very certain nor encouraging voice, visions of England at least would throng upon the exile's memory: the busy school-room, the green playing fields, holidays at home, and the perennial roar of London, and the fireside and the white head of his father. For it is the destiny of those grave, restrained and classic writers, with whom we make enforced and often painful acquaintanceship at school, to pass into the blood and become native in the memory; so that a phrase of Vergil speaks not so much of Mantua or Augustus, but of English places and the student's own irrevocable youth.

Zabughin<sup>18</sup> gives hints of other examples of the use of the *Sortes Vergilianae* which I have not been able to verify outside of his own book. He says:

'The examples of Virgilian fortune-telling, noted by me, are all French; but their existence is supported by written evidence in Italy by the very authoritative testimony (sixteenth century) of L. G. Giraldis.... The Palatine Latin MS (Number 1905) in the Vatican fortunately affords us a valuable example of Virgilian "semi-fortune-telling", a spirited little play of political content, and French, even Huguenot origin: "a theater-play of seething France", as the title defines it. In spite of the initial description, "every thing turns on chance", it treats of course of Virgilian verses suitably chosen and applied to definite persons or historic facts'.

That the *Sortes Vergilianae* are a priceless asset even to-day is the belief of at least one scholar. Professor Slater has related several of his own personal experiences with the Virgilian prophecies (see pages 10-13 of the pamphlet mentioned in note 14, above):

... In August 1914, in the week of the German rush for Paris, when von Kluck was trying desperately to 'hack his way through'; when day by day in the *Times* diagram the black line of the hostile advance was slipping nearer and nearer to its objective; when all were anxious and in some quarters it was thought that the fall of Paris was only a matter of days;—a scholar

turned, not unnaturally, to his Vergil for light. What said the Oracle? The *sortes* was from the Sixth *Aeneid*, and the words ran thus <602-606>.... (There you have the lure—and the menace. Then the *sortes* and the consolation)

*'Furiarum maxima iuxta*

*Accubat et manibus prohibet contingere mensas'.*

A year later when all London was harassed by the almost nightly visits of the Zeppelin, the "scholar" turned again to Vergil. The oracle was from *Aeneid* 9. 59-63, the description of the prowling wolf:

... And as when a wolf, lying in wait about a crowded fold, roars beside the pens at midnight, enduring winds and rains; safe beneath their mothers the lambs keep bleating; he, fierce and reckless in his wrath, rages against the prey beyond his reach...

Curiously well suited to the situation was the message this classical scholar discovered (12) in *Aeneid* 5.604, at the time of the attempt to force the Dardanelles; then he read the account of "the four 'capital ships' Aeneas lost, the set-back to his hopes and the joyless reflection: 'Hic primum Fortuna fidem mutata novavit'..." In seeking a fourth lot (12), this time in connection with the Czar and the Revolution in Russia, the "scholar" opened upon the lines on the fall of Priam (*Aeneid* 2.557-558).

In conclusion, we should, of course, remember that in this anxious scanning of the sayings of a poet in an effort to learn the future men did not confine themselves to the *Aeneid*. Long before Vergil's day men believed that the works of Homer were prophetic. Later, when Christianity substituted for the pagan mode of divination an equally superstitious method of divination based on the Bible, the *Sortes Vergilianae* found their Christian counterpart in the *Sortes Sanctorum*. Thomas De Quincey<sup>19</sup>, in one of his speculative and theological essays on Modern Superstition, discusses these privileged books. He believes that the works consulted varied with the caprice or the error of the ages. The Hebrew Scriptures, for example, which once had the preference, were probably laid aside not so much because reverence for their authority decreased as because reverence for that authority increased to such a degree that this use of sacred words seemed sacrilegious. De Quincey considered Vergil a most unhappy choice. He vigorously condemns such use of the *Aeneid*, saying,

Considering the very limited range of ideas to which Vergil was tied by his theme—a colonising expedition in a barbarous age—no worse book could have been selected. So little indeed does the *Aeneid* exhibit of human life in its multifariousness that much tampering with the plain sense of the text is required to bring real cases of human interest and real situations within the scope of any Virgilian response, though aided by the utmost latitude of accommodation. A king, a soldier, a sailor, etc., might look for correspondences to their own circumstances. But, beyond these broad obvious categories, and a few subdivisions lying within them, it is vain to look for any reasonable compass of discrimination in the oracles of Vergil. Indeed it is this very limitation in the Virgilian range of ideas, when the case itself imposed a vast Shaksperian breadth of speculation,—a field of vision like that on which the Fiend may be supposed to have planted

<sup>17</sup>This story was published in McClure's Magazine, February to July, 1894, Volume 2. For the passage quoted in the text see page 244.

<sup>18</sup>Vladimiro Zabughin, *Vergilio nel Rinascimento Italiano da Dante a Torquato Tasso; Fortuna, Studi, Imitazioni, Traduzioni e Parodie, Iconografia*, 2.373-374, 422-423 (two volumes. Bologna, Zanichelli, 1921). The translation of Zabughin is my own.

<sup>19</sup>See his *Collected Writings*, as edited by David Masson, 8.430-422, 1.124, 13.1, 3.251-269 (London, A. and C. Black, 1896).

Christ when showing to him all the kingdoms of the earth,—that eventually threw back the earnest inquiries into futurity upon the *Sortes Biblicae*.

Why, then, if the *Aeneid* was in truth the worst that pagan literature offered and was so limited in respect to its compass of thought and variety of situation and character, was it ever chosen as an oracular book? De Quincey suggests what seems to him a very probable reason for this choice, and says that it was doubtless this same motive that led Dante to select Vergil as his guide through the Lower World. Just as to the seventh son of a seventh son popular belief has always attributed the possession of supernatural and magical powers, so have similar qualities been given by popular tradition to any man whose maternal grandfather was a magician. Now the name of Vergil's maternal grandfather was Magus (so tradition said), but the ignorant people of Naples made the mistake of thinking that it was a title indicating his profession. So, argues De Quincey,

according to the belief of the Lazzaroni, that excellent Christian, P. Virgilius Maro, had stepped by mere succession and right of inheritance into his wicked old grandpapa's infernal powers and knowledge, both of which he exercised for centuries without blame, and for the benefit of the faithful.

A few, perhaps, may be willing to accept these views of De Quincey, but surely more would say that it is the spirit of humanity pervading Vergil's works which is the source of his never-failing power. Sensitively responsive to all life around him, Vergil expressed in his verses depths of feeling common to all mankind. The fact that for eighteen centuries Vergil has been held worthy to stand side by side with the Bible as an oracle of life is nothing less than the tribute of the world to the range and power of his works.

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HELEN A. LOANE

### ANIMAL-NOURISHED CHILDREN

My colleague, Professor E. E. Burriss, cites<sup>1</sup> a modern parallel to the suckling of Romulus and Remus by the she-wolf. I may add a similar instance reported in *The New York Times*, October 22, 1926, from a London dispatch of the day previous:

Two little "wolf girls" were found recently living in a wolf's den near an isolated village in Bengal, British India. The story is told by *The Westminster Gazette*, which received it from India, vouchsafed for by the Rev. Jal Singh of Midnapur, Bengal, and Bishop Pakenham Walsh of Bishops College, Calcutta.

Bishop Walsh relates that about the end of August, while visiting the Rev. Jal Singh's orphanage at Midnapur, Mr. Singh recounted how he discovered the "wolf girls".

In a distant part of his district not long before the villagers pointed out to him a path they avoided because it was haunted by demons. Investigation revealed a wolf den in which there were several wolf cubs and two girls, about two and eight years of age, both exceedingly fierce, running on all fours, uttering guttural barks and living like wolves.

The supposition was that they were abandoned as babies by their mother or mothers and were found and

adopted by the she wolf. With much difficulty, the children were rescued, but the younger died soon afterward.

The elder child survived and is now at the orphanage. She was gradually weaned from her savage ways, but she fought fiercely against wearing clothes, and tore them off even after they were sewn on her. For a time she refused to be washed and ate with her mouth in a dish. Eventually she was taught to use her hands and say a few words.

She is still weak mentally and neither cries nor laughs, but is gentle with animals, preferring the company of dogs to children.

There may be some significance in the fact that both these examples dealing with the suckling of children by wolves come from India. That for some reason such stories are current in India may be inferred from the setting in which Kipling locates his story of Mowgli, the foundling who was nourished by a wolf and who ran with the pack until he became a man and felt again the call of his people<sup>2</sup>. In this sophisticated version the wolf-child is no brute, but a sort of Faun uniting in himself the intelligence of man and the uncanny physical alertness of the animal. In the mouth of one of his characters, a shrewd German forester ripe with experience in the Jungle, Kipling suggests that he is acquainted with other examples, rare but still numerous enough to find an occasional place in census reports<sup>3</sup>:

Normally, they die young—these people.... why he is not dead I do not understand.... He is a miracle. I tell you, Gisborne, some day you will find it so. He is blood-brother to every beast in the *rukhl*.... Now I will tell you that only once in my service, and that is thirty years, have I met a boy that began as this man began. And he died. Sometimes you hear of them in the census reports, but they all die. This man has lived, and he is an anachronism, for he is before the Iron Age, and the Stone Age....

Later, however, Kipling allows his portrayal of the animal-nourished boy to be distorted, a little sentimentally perhaps. Again through the medium of his forester, he conceives of Mowgli as a physical god, in a vague complex suggestive of the Golden Age, "the glory that was Greece", and Rousseau's "natural man" in an over-civilized world:

Though we shift and bedeck and bedrape us,  
Thou art noble and nude and antique;  
Libitina thy mother, Priapus  
Thy father, a god and a Greek.

Stories of the nourishing of human beings by animals other than the wolf are, however, not unknown. Doughty, in his book on Arabia<sup>4</sup>, gives an instance in which a gazelle was the central figure. He had pointed out to him a certain cliff called "the soldier's wareroom", where, the Beduins told him,

A soldier's wife travailing in the march, died, and her husband hastily buried her there; and because no woman was in the caravan to give it suck, he forsook her babe under the rock's shadow. The father as he came by again in the ascending pilgrimage (seventy

<sup>1</sup>Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918: first edition, 1893).

<sup>2</sup>Pages 328-332 (from the chapter entitled *In the Rukh*). I have for the sake of clarity made Muller speak English instead of the ineffective vaudeville dialect which he uses in the novel.

<sup>3</sup>Charles M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, 1.514 (New York, Boni and Liveright, 1925).

<sup>4</sup>In *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 21 (1928), 104.



days after) found his child yet alive, which had been suckled by gazelle dams of the wilderness.

An interesting example may be adduced from Egypt. In the temples of Dêir el Bahiri and of Luxor there are representations of Hatshepsut and of Amenophis III as children being suckled by the goddess Hathor in the form of a cow<sup>3</sup>. Both these drawings date from about 1500 B. C. The act was in Egypt symbolical of the divine origin of the king and the queen, and would seem to derive from some primitive belief in animal-nourished children or would at any rate indicate familiarity with stories of that type.

Although, as I have shown, other animals appear in tales of this sort, it seems that the wolf is preferred, possibly because its general reputation for ferocity enhances the effectiveness of the story. For the universality of the tales, I transcribe a paragraph from Edward B. Tylor<sup>4</sup>:

Of all things, what mythologic work needs is breadth of knowledge and of handling. Interpretations made to suit a narrow view reveal their weakness when exposed to a wide one. See Herodotus rationalizing the story of the infant Cyrus, exposed and suckled by a bitch; he simply relates that the child was brought up by a herdsman's wife named Spakô (in Greek Kynô), whence arose the fable that a real bitch rescued and fed him. So far so good—for a single case. But does the story of Romulus and Remus likewise record a real event, mystified in the self-same manner by a pun on a nurse's name, which happened to be a she-beast's? Did the Roman twins also really happen to be exposed, and brought up by a foster-mother who happened to be called Lupa? Positively, the 'Lempriere's Dictionary' of our youth (I quote the 16th edition of 1831) gravely gives this as the origin of the famous legend. Yet, if we look properly into the matter, we find that these two stories are but specimens of a widespread mythic group, itself only a section of that far larger body of traditions in which exposed infants are saved to become national heroes. For other examples, Slavonic folk-lore tells of the she-wolf and she-bear that suckled those superhuman twins, Waligora the mountain-roller and Wyrwidab the oak-uprooter; Germany has its legend of Dieterich, called Wolfdieterich from his foster-mother the she-wolf; in India, the episode recurs in the tales of Satavahana and the lioness, and Sing-Baba and the tigress; legend tells of Burta-Chino, the boy who was cast into a lake, and preserved by a she-wolf to become founder of the Turkish kingdom; and even the savage Yuracaré of Brazil tell of their divine hero Tiri, who was suckled by a jaguar.

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### WOLF-CHILDREN

Any one interested in the matter of wolf-children will find a series of letters on the subject in The London

<sup>3</sup>Adolph Erman, *Aegyptus und Aegyptisches Leben im Altertum*, 60 (in the edition of Herman Ranke, Tübingen, J. C. B. Moore, 1923). The drawing of Hatshepsut is reproduced as figure 13 on page 61.

<sup>4</sup>Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom 1.281-282 (4th edition, two volumes London, John Murray, 1903). On the chance that it may be found of value I give also his footnote to the passage, useful although certainly no model of bibliographical accuracy: "Hanusch, 'Slav. Myth.' p. 323; Grimm, D. M. p. 363; Latham, 'Descr. Eth.' vol. ii. p. 438; I. J. Schmidt, 'Forschungen' p. 13; J. G. Müller, 'Amer. Urrelig.' p. 268. See also Plutarch, *Parallela* xxxvi; Campbell, 'Highland Tales,' vol. i. p. 378; Max Müller, 'Chips,' vol. ii. p. 169; Tylor, 'Wild Men and Beast-children,' in *Anthropological Review*, May 1863."

Times, about the end of 1926 or the early part of 1927 or both (I write from memory). The correspondents expressed very diverse views; some were convinced that instances they reported were genuine, others refused all credence. I was interested myself because, not long before, a friend here in St. Andrews had shown me a letter from his nephew, in the Indian Civil Service, telling him of two children who had been rescued from the den of a wolf. They were housed and tended in an American Mission Hospital. One had died. The other, after some years in the hospital, was still more wolfish than human. I am sorry that I cannot give further particulars, but I remember that I never doubted the statements of the letter.

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A. SHEWAN

### HORACE, CARMINA 2.6.9-14 THE RIVER GALAESUS AGAIN

In THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 20. 91-93, I had something to say about Horace, *Carmina* 2.6.9-14, in particular about the river Galaesus mentioned there. My remarks on the subject were prompted by a reading of a book by George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy*. What I wrote called forth utterances by others (see 20. 121, 137, 180, 21.33-35). I recur here, for the last time, to the subject.

Some time ago, Professor W. T. Raymond, of Fredericton, N. B., Canada, wrote me as follows about the matter:

About the river Galaesus and Tarentum it may be of interest to note that Lenormant (*La Grande-Grèce* 1.20) says of the little village of Citrezze near Tarentum, with its little Chapel of S. Maria di Galeo: "la beauté des eaux, et l'ombrage des arbres touffus, créent une sensation de fraîcheur dont le charme, sous ce climat ardent, ne saurait se décrire".

In these days when matter concerning the Classics is pouring from the presses in such volumes no man can keep track of all that has been printed on a given subject. Often we find that something which a writer, in entire good faith, has published as an original observation of his own had in fact appeared long ago. It occurred to me, one day, to look up this matter of the Galaesus in a book which once had a great vogue, but which, in these days of apartments (instead of houses) and of small personal libraries, probably is to be found on the shelves in few private studies of readers of THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY. I have in mind William Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*<sup>1</sup>. Under the article *Galaesus* (1.926, column 1) I find the following:

... Though its name was so celebrated, the Galaesus was a very trifling stream, and there is considerable difficulty in identifying it. The name is generally given by local antiquarians, and apparently by a kind of local tradition, to a small stream of limpid water which flows into the great port of Tarentum or *Mare Piccolo*, on its N. side, now known as *Le Citrezze*;

<sup>1</sup>My copy of this work bears the imprint of Little, Brown, and Company (Boston, 1865). The work was published originally in London (the Preface of my copy is dated "London, 1853").



and, according to Zannoni's map, there still exists in its neighborhood a church called *Sta. Maria di Galeo*. Both Polybius and Livy, however, give the distance of the Galaesus from Tarentum at 5 miles or 40 stadia, a statement wholly irreconcilable with the popular view; and the stream in question is moreover so small that it is impossible for an army to have encamped on its banks, its whole course being only a few hundred yards in length. Swinburne's supposition that the *Cervaro*—a much more considerable stream, flowing into the *Mare Piccolo* at its head or E. extremity—is the true Galaesus, would certainly accord better with the statement of Polybius <8.35> and Livy <25.11> and at least as well with the poetical epithets of the stream, on which, however, too much stress must not be laid. (Romanelli, vol. i. p. 292; D'Aquino, *Delizie Tarentine*, with the notes of Carducci, p. 49; Swinburne, *Travels*, vol. i. pp. 227, 232; Craven, *Travels*, p. 181).

Under Tarentum (2.1100, column 2), I find the following statement:

...The more celebrated stream of the GALAESUS flowed into the *Mare Piccola* <sic> or harbour of Tarentum on its N. shore: it is commonly identified with the small stream called *Le Citrezze*, an old church near which still retains the name of *Sta* <sic> *Maria di Galeo*....

Both articles are signed "E. H. B." (= Edward Herbert Bunbury, of Trinity College, Cambridge, in his day a leading authority on ancient geography).

CHARLES KNAPP

#### ROMAN POETS AND PLAGIARISM

If any one is at all disturbed by the statements so frequently made concerning the indebtedness of Roman poets to their Greek predecessors—of Horace, for example, to Alcaeus, of Vergil to Homer and Apollonius Rhodius, let him ponder, over and over, the following remarks of James Russell Lowell<sup>1</sup>.

"The first question we put to any poet, nay, to any so-called national literature, is that which Farinata addressed to Dante, *Chi fur li maggior tui*? Here is no question of plagiarism, for poems are not made of words and thoughts and images, but of that something in the poet himself which can compel them to obey him and move to the rhythm of his nature. Thus it is that the new poet, however late he come, can never be forestalled, and the ship-builder who built the pinnacle of Columbus has as much claim to the discovery of America as he who suggests a thought by which some other man opens new worlds to us has to share in that achievement by him unconceived and inconceivable. Chaucer undoubtedly began as an imitator, perhaps as mere translator, serving the needful apprenticeship in the use of his tools. Children learn to speak by watching the lips and catching the words of those who know how already, and poets learn in the same way from their elders. They import their raw material from any and everywhere, and the question at last comes down to this,—whether an author have original force enough to assimilate all he has acquired, or that he be so overmastering as to assimilate *him*. If the poet turn out the stronger, we allow him to help himself from other people with wonderful equanimity. Should a man discover the art of transmuting metals and present us with a lump of gold as large as an ostrich-egg, would it be in human nature to inquire too nicely whether he had stolen the lead?

Nothing is more certain than that great poets are not sudden prodigies, but slow results. As an oak profits by the foregone lives of immemorial vegetable races

that have worked-over the juices of earth and air into organic life out of whose dissolution a soil might gather fit to maintain that nobler birth of nature, so we may be sure that the genius of every remembered poet drew the forces that built it up out of the decay of a long succession of forgotten ones. Nay, in proportion as the genius is vigorous and original will its indebtedness be greater, will its roots strike deeper into the past and grope in remoter fields for the virtue that must sustain it. Indeed, if the works of the great poets teach anything, it is to hold mere invention somewhat cheap. It is not the finding of a thing, but the making something out of it after it is found, that is of consequence. Accordingly, Chaucer, like Shakespeare, invented almost nothing. Wherever he found anything directed to Geoffrey Chaucer, he took it and made the most of it. It was not the subject treated, but himself, that was the new thing. *Cela m'appartient de droit*, Molière is reported to have said when accused of plagiarism. Chaucer pays that 'usurious interest which genius, as Coleridge says, 'always pays in borrowing.' The characteristic touch is his own. In the famous passage about the caged bird, copied from the 'Romaunt of the Rose,' the 'gon eten wormes' was added by him. We must let him, if he will, eat the heart out of the literature that had preceded him, as we sacrifice the mulberry-leaves to the silkworm, because he knows how to convert them into something richer and more lasting. The question of originality is not one of form, but of substance, not of cleverness, but of imaginative power. Given your material, in other words the life in which you live, how much can you see in it? For on that depends how much you can make of it. Is it merely an arrangement of man's contrivance, a patchwork of expediences for temporary comfort and convenience, good enough if it last your time, or is it so much of the surface of that ever-flowing deity which we call Time, wherein we catch such fleeting reflection as is possible for us, of our relation to perdurable things? This is what makes the difference between Aeschylus and Euripides, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Goethe and Heine, between literature and rhetoric. Something of this depth of insight, if not in the fullest, yet in no inconsiderable measure, characterizes Chaucer. We must not let his playfulness, his delight in the world as mere spectacle, mislead us into thinking that he was incapable of serious purpose or insensible to the deeper meanings of life".

CHARLES KNAPP

#### THE NEW YORK CLASSICAL CLUB<sup>1</sup>

At the meeting of The New York Classical Club on February 5, 1927, Dr. T. Leslie Shear, of Princeton University, gave a most interesting illustrated lecture on The New Excavations in the Polychrome Theater in Corinth.

The city is known to us through the story of Bellerophon, for whom Athena left a bridle upon an altar. With this he caught the winged horse Pegasus as he came down to drink at the spring of Pyrene. On the plain, Ibycus was slain; as he died, he called on the passing cranes to avenge his death. Later the murderers were caught while they were at the theater. As a flock of cranes flew overhead, an involuntary exclamation from one of them, 'Lo, the avengers of Ibycus', betrayed their guilt.

Dr. Shear, who has been in personal charge of the excavations, told of the great difficulty of the work. The floor of the theater was forty feet beneath the modern surface, and 15,000 cubic feet of earth had to be removed. Despite some accidents, the final reward was magnificent.

<sup>1</sup>The passage is part (298-301) of an essay entitled Chaucer, which occupies pages 291-366 of Lowell's Literary Essays III (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company: latest copyright, 1910).

<sup>2</sup>The delay in the publication of this notice is entirely my fault. C. K. >

The floor of the Roman theater, built probably by Hadrian, was of cement covered with thin marble slabs. Here were found archaic statues dating back to 600 B. C., grotesque masks, two weights (one of them had the letter *eta* engraved on it, a fact which has led to the establishment of a more accurate standard of weights), terra cotta figurines, and a great many coins. The face on the coins was probably taken from a bust of Galba, also discovered here.

The wall surrounding the orchestra was brilliantly painted to represent fights between men and animals. The east side is better preserved—it was made out of the natural rock. The first figure is that of a man with red boots and a purple robe, of a kind worn by the Alban kings, adopted by Caesar, and passed on to the Roman Emperors. The next scene is acrobatic in character—a man and beast are represented in mid-air. On the west side of the orchestra is the painting of a man on his hands about to spring over a charging lion, which begins to fawn on him. This recalls the Roman fable of Androcles and his lion. There was found also an altar delicately carved with festoons draped from the horns of bulls; in the center a bird is perched on the extending branch of a wreath.

The theater was burned in 396 A. D.

Beneath the Roman theater was the Greek theater, a far richer find. Here a wall was decorated with marble slabs representing warriors fighting against Amazons (these date back to the second century B. C.), and the struggles between the Giants and the Gods. The latter scenes are larger and better done. The technical execution and the restraint of emotion shown in the figures of the Giants date them about the end of the fourth century B. C. At the two ends of the orchestra were found finely sculptured statues. One was a Greek copy of the original of the Doryphorus (by Polyclitus). The other was that of Sappho, also a copy of an original bronze (by Sillanion). These statues were richly colored, in hair, eyes, nostrils, lips, and robes. There were also four busts of deities—Hermes, Apollo, Hera, and Aphrodite, all magnificently done. The last was exquisitely beautiful.

A water-channel running around the edge of the orchestra was spanned by marble bridge-arches so skillfully cut that, though they present the appearance of arches, they are in reality solid slabs of marble.

Americans may well be proud of Dr. Shear's work in having unearthed such rich treasures as "the painted circumference of the orchestra, the unique bridge-slabs, the painted athletic scenes, and the magnificent pieces of sculpture".

BEATRICE STEPANEK, *Censor*

#### "A HOMERIC EXPRESSION ILLUSTRATED"

IN THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 21, 136, Mr. Russel M. Geer wrote briefly under the caption A Homeric Expression Illustrated. The date (800 B. C.) ascribed to the Audacht Moraind is either a slip of the pen or a misprint. It should be 800 A. D.<sup>1</sup>

The Audacht Moraind is the will or testament of Morann, or Morann Mac Móin, an Irish king of the first century A. D. It is a book of precepts meant for his son and heir, Feradach.

The compound word *núallgnáth* means 'shout-accustomed'. The transition in meaning to 'good at shouting' is easy, and so, as Mr. Geer points out, the word is then a striking parallel to the Homeric *βῆψ δῆαός*.

<sup>1</sup>THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY is guiltless here.

Nevertheless, Professor Smith's interpretation of *núallgnáth* as 'accustomed to victory' is just as far-fetched as it would be to make the Homeric words mean 'mighty at winning victory'.

The Irish word *núall* means any loud outcry, of battle, victory, revelry, grief. In Modern Irish as in Old Irish the word is often used to indicate the outcry of grief.

Inasmuch as Nere had been deputed by Morann to deliver the Audacht to Feradach, he was, for the purposes of this mission, the messenger or herald of the king. If he is 'mighty at the shout', his ability to deliver his message in strong, clear tones is well suited to his office.

I cast my lot, then, with Professor Thurneysen rather than with Professor Smith (see Mr. Geer's note).

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#### MORE REPEATED ADVERSATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

Instances of the use in ancient and modern literature of adversative conjunctions repeated for effect have been cited in THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 14, 153-154, 15, 8, 32, 184, 18, 8, 19, 42. The following are additional examples.

Second Corinthians 2, 17, 7, 11 (ἀλλὰ twice, six times).

Matthew Arnold, Empedocles on Etna, 2, 112-117, 261-265, 397-398:

"Among a people of children,  
Who throng'd me in their cities,  
Who worshipp'd me in their houses,  
And ask'd, not wisdom,  
But drugs to charm with,  
But spells to mutter".

"But he, who has outliv'd his prosperous days,  
But he, whose youth fell on a different world  
From that on which his exiled age is thrown. . . .  
Joy and the outward world must die to him,  
As they are dead to me!"

But I have not grown easy in these bonds—  
But I have not denied what bonds these were!

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#### DONN BYRNE AND THE VIGIL OF VENUS

The following passage from Donn Byrne's Messer Marco Polo (pages 14-15 of the edition published by The Century Company, New York, 1921) furnishes an excellent parallel to the Pervigilium Veneris, not only recalling the warmth and color of the Latin poem, but also echoing one of its phrases (*virgines rosae*, 18. (In the quotation the italics are mine):

"But the young people would know it was spring, too, by token of the gaiety that was in the air. For nothing brings joy to the heart like the coming of spring. The folk who do be blind all the rest of the year, their eyes do open then, and a sunset takes them, and the wee *virgin flowers* coming up between the stones, or the twitter of a bird upon the bough. . . . And young women do be preening themselves, and young men do be singing, even they that have the voices of rooks. There is something stirring in them that is stirring in the ground, with the bursting of the seeds".

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